

## Looking back on over forty years of frantic Tuesdays

BY BOBBIE CUTLER

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It is gratifying to be appreciated and to have an entire Town Meeting Selectmen, FinCom, and all the notables of Duxbury thank you for a job you've been at for the past 40 years. And a job which has given so much pleasure to its editors that it never seemed like dreary day to day work, but mostly fun. True, there has been stress, disappointment, criticism, hard work, long hours, sleepless nights — wondering if you had remembered to put Mrs. So and so's ad on page 5 or 6, or if your "continueds" were in the right place. For if a front page story were continued to the wrong page, who would find it? Who would bother? On Wednesday mornings you rush to the office, grab a Clipper, and give it the onceover, heart sinking as you find the errors you hoped to avoid. The wrong caption. It's Mar bu Joan who headed the Garden Club, and you groan when the phone rings later and the complaints come in. Where is my classified? I'm having a yard sale and it is not in the paper. I told you to take out that classified, I sold the car two weeks ago and my phone has been ringing ever since. My Clipper did not come for the second week, where is it? A call from California, "Where is my Clipper?" A call from Boston, "I'm getting two Clippers and one is sufficient," and bang goes down the phone. Often I wish I could not be here the day the Clipper hits the stands to miss the complaints. But all in all, the pleasure of running a weekly in a town like Duxbury is supreme.

Mondays and Tuesdays, when the bulk of the copy comes in, you meet folks from all over town. Polite, caring people who are grateful for our accepting what they have written. Newcomer appears, wanting to subscribe. "I moved in yesterday and I understand I must subscribe to the Clipper."

### Starting out

Looking back over 40 years and thinking of the wonderful staff the Clipper has always had, how could we have published it without them.

In 1950, when the idea of starting a weekly in Duxbury first occurred to us, we of course knew nothing about newspapering. John, of course, had been editor of the 5th Army Corps News when an Army private, of the South Atlantic News, when a Navy Lt., and had written two syndicated columns and many magazine and newspaper columns, but what did he know of putting out a weekly — nothing at all. We merely wanted to get the news of what was happening in Duxbury out to the then only just under 3,000 year-round residents. But how to do it we had no idea. The summer before, John and our neighbor Arthur Beane had been in charge of floats for the Fourth of July parade and I had helped call the various organizations in town. Never did we realize there were so many, nearly 100 clubs including The Squeaky Scissors Club, the Nameless Group (of which we were active members), the Grage, Scouts, Legion, Garden Club, and many more. Yet no one knew of the activities of these groups. Clubs and stores sent penny postcards to boxholders giving news of meeting, of sales. Barnes Market (now Duxbury Wine and Spirits)

might send a postcard giving prices of steak, frozen peas and scotch. Even after the Clipper started, the Garden Club kept sending postcards until finally they decided to put a notice in the Clipper of their monthly meetings. The first issue of six pages — yes we folded the pages, inserting a single page — came out on Thursday, May 11, 1950. We mailed all 1,200 copies to every boxholder and at mailtime hung around the Post Office, watching people opening the paper and noted their expressions. There was no mention of John or Bobbie Cutler in that first issue, but the front page story was one of great importance — the state had been trying to take over our beach and several hundred residents had gone to the State House to protest. This made good reading. Of course the state did not then and though the threat has always been there, there has not since been such a concerted effort to do so.

Duxbury people were so receptive to the new weekly, once they knew who was behind it. Oliver Rodman and son volunteered a column and Linc Dow offered a column, “Baysides,” about boating. Edward Mallowney suggested small items about people which we included in a column called “Around Town.” Many brought in memories of earlier days in Duxbury. Many of them were excellent writers and not a word could be changed. Some of the writers were Dr. Alice Bigelow, Stuart Huckins, Sabina Marshall, Margaret Metcalf, Cid Ricketts Sumner, Fisher Ames, Gershom Bradford, Henry Cragin Walker, Joe Lund and Alison Arnold.

The list is endless of those excellent writers who contributed to the early issues of the Clipper, bringing into print unpublished history of our town.

Before the first issue was out, John said, “You’d better go around and get some advertising.” I was stunned, for I had failed miserably when in college, attempting to sell advertising for the college humor magazine, giving up after a few attempts, so I timidly canvassed Duxbury and Plymouth merchants, telling them that John and I were about to start a newspaper which would be strictly Duxbury news. Most were polite but said they would have to see what it looked like before making up their minds about ads. But some were gracious and agreed to place a small ad. The nicest people were bank presidents. At the Plymouth National Bank (later to become the Bank of New England-South), while waiting for the president, I noticed a booklet on the counter, How to Start a Weekly Newspaper. When I went into the president’s office, I asked him if I could borrow the book. “Bring it back,” he said, “someone else might want to see it.” Well, I didn’t bring it back and conveniently lost it somewhere in our house. If we had read it, we never would have started the Clipper — the words of warning were so severe. “Never start a newspaper, buy an existing one. Never start a newspaper in a resort town” and other such dire warnings. The president took out a fourinch ad, as did all the other bank presidents. The treasurer of Rockland Trust (I had to go all the way to Rockland for the ad as there was yet not branch here in Duxbury), was especially kind to me, Nelson Poole. And in Plymouth, the head of the Plymouth County Electric Co., now Commonwealth Electric, was wonderful.

We had real rapport when he discovered that I had twins — he also had twins, and when I’d go to his office every Monday to pick up an ad, he would ask, “How are the twins?” They were big ads, perhaps a quarter of a page, advertising refrigerators, stoves and washing machines. In fact, the minute after our fifth child was born at Jordan Hospital, I called Mr. Golden. “When John Cutler comes in for the ad, tell him it’s a boy.” He gave me his congratulations.

Shermans was another gold mine, I thought, and such nice people there. But we still have very few ads. After the first month in business, I sent out bills. Of course, the reputable businesses paid promptly, but I neglected to have a list of any kind of to whom I had sent the bills, so I didn't know who paid and who didn't. This took some time to figure out. Not knowing any bookkeeping, I took a short course at the adult education at night, but it was all about double entry bookkeeping, which to this day, I do not understand. I also took a course in typing which did some good, although I still have to look at the keys most of the time.

Money was tight for John and me those first few years. His stories, usually one a week — sometimes more in the Boston Sunday Post — brought in \$20 each, which bought enough food for a week. Finally, he took a job lecturing at Boston University part-time, which brought in a few more dollars. But times were tough, trying to feed a family of six, buy clothes, pay the heating and other bills. At Thanksgiving time, my Aunt May always bought the turkey, but we had to supply the vegetables, cranberry sauce and dessert. One year, we didn't have a dime to do that, so I rummaged around, finding a few antiques we could live without, including warming pan, a spinning wheel and took over to the Plymouth Antique Center and sold them to Mr. Klasky, father of Melvin, who still runs the business. Coming home with \$13.80, I ran in the door and called to John, "Now we can buy the potatoes, onions and cranberries."

Another time when the Nameless Group, a group of men and women our age, loosely connected with St. John's Church, decided to hold a dance and charge \$1.25 per person. The day came and we had no money to attend. So that afternoon I went to Plymouth, sold a two-inch ad for \$2.50, begged the man to pay in advance, which he did, slightly protesting, and we were able to go to the dance in the Old Town Hall.



**Bobbie Cutler shared the helm of the Clipper for more than 40 years.**

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**The Clipepr's second office was tucked into a single room on Snug Harbor Warf. Later it would take up quarters above Snug Harbor Fish Market.**